

Romans Session 86

Dead to the Law 3

Romans 7:1-6 (NASB)

¹ *Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives?*

² *For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband.*

³ *So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man.*

⁴ *Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.*

⁵ *For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.*

⁶ *But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.*

Paul has shown us that the believer is no longer under the law regarding its power to condemn. In Chapter 7, he expounds the second truth in that verse that believers are now under grace.

And as he explains that he presents an axiom (v1), an analogy (vv2-3), an application (vv4-5), and an affirmation (v6) We want to take these one at a time and go through what Paul is trying to show and explain to those believers in the Roman Church.

AXIOM

Romans 7:1 (NASB)

¹ *Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives?*

The tactful and rhetorical question **Do you not know?** Indicates the apostle is once again using a self-evident truth as the foundation of his argument.

The term **brethren**, refers to Paul's Jewish brethren (**those who know the law**).

He may be emphasizing this term to assure Jewish believers of his sensitivity to their deep concern about his seeming denigration of the Mosaic **law**.

His primary point here, however, relates to any **law**, as indicated by the absence of a definite article before a noun, in this case **law, in the Greek text**.

The literal translation is simply, to those who know law, it should be obvious, that any law whether Roman, Greek, or even God-given biblical law has jurisdiction over a person only as long as he lives.

We said last time we were together that if a criminal dies, he is no longer subject to prosecution and punishment, no matter how numerous and heinous his crimes may have been. He is now dead to the law.

Alright, now let's look at the analogy

ANALOGY

Romans 7:2-3 (NASB)

² *For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband.*

³ *So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her*

husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man.

Contrary to the confusing interpretations of some commentators, the apostle is not presenting a complex allegory, or an allegory of any kind.

He is simply making an analogy to marriage law to illustrate the single point he has just mentioned, namely, that no law has jurisdiction over a person after he is dead.

This passage has absolutely nothing to say about divorce and cannot legitimately be used as an argument from silence to teach that divorce is never justified for a Christian and consequently, that only the death of a spouse gives the right to remarry. There are other scriptures to deal with that.

Paul is calling attention to the fact that marriage laws are binding only as long as both partners are alive. Being **joined to another man** while her husband is alive makes a woman **an adulteress**, an offender against the law.

But to be joined in marriage to another man after **her husband dies** is perfectly legal and acceptable. A widow is, absolutely, **free from the law** that bound her to her former husband.

Paul, in fact, encouraged young widows to remarry, as long as they are married to a believer.

1 Corinthians 7:39 (NASB)

³⁹ A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.

Such widows, he says, should;

1 Timothy 5:14 (NASB)

¹⁴ Therefore, I want younger widows to get married, bear children, keep house, and give the enemy no occasion for reproach;

So that is the analogy,

THE APPLICATION

Romans 7:4-5 (NASB)

⁴ Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.

⁵ For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.

The word **therefore**, marks the transition from Paul's brief axiom and analogy to his application, and his adding **my** before a second use of the word **brethren** makes that term even gentler and more personal than in verse 1.

It is at this point that Paul begins his spiritual teaching in the passage.

Just as the death of her husband frees a woman from the marriage that had bound them together, he declares, **you** (that is, Christians) **were made to die to the Mosaic Law**.

Were made to die, translates the aorist tense of *thanatoo*, which emphasizes the completeness and finality of death. The verb is also passive, indicating that believers do not die naturally or put themselves to death but have been **made to die** by the divine act of God in response to faith in His Son.

Now listen, obedience to the law was never a means of salvation,

Romans 3:20 (NASB)

²⁰ because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

The law has power only to condemn men to death for their sin;

Romans 6:23 (NASB)

²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

But now power to redeem them from it.

Paul has already pointed out that God's grace extended by faith in Jesus Christ brings death to and freedom from sin

Romans 6:3-7 (NASB)

³ Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?

⁴ Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

⁵ For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection,

⁶ knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;

⁷ for he who has died is freed from sin.

He now declares that faith in Him also brings death to **the Law** and consequently freedom from the law's penalty.

Through the body of Christ, who suffered the penalty of death on their behalf, believers are freed from their relationship to the law, just as a widow is freed from her relationship to her former husband.

And like the widow believers are free to **be joined to another** husband, as it were, to Jesus Christ, **Him who was raised from the dead**.

Salvation brings a complete change of spiritual relationship, just as remarriage after the death of a spouse brings a complete change of marital relationship.

Believers are no longer married to the law but are now married to Jesus Christ, the divine Bridegroom of His Church.

Paul writes to the Ephesian Church these words;

Ephesians 5:24-27 (NASB)

²⁴ But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,

²⁶ so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

²⁷ that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

Using the same figure of marriage, the apostle lovingly told the Corinthian believers;

2 Corinthians 11:2 (NASB)

² For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.

The underlying emphasis of the book of Romans is that salvation produces total transformation.

Through Jesus death and resurrection;

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NASB)

²¹ He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

The purpose for our being joined to Christ is **that we might bear fruit for God.**

Ephesians 2:10 (NASB)

¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Paul gives additional insight in his letter to the Galatians;

Galatians 2:19-20 (NASB)

¹⁹ "For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God.

²⁰ "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

The transformed life will **bear fruit for God.**

The great theologian Charles Hodge wrote,

"As far as we are concerned, redemption is in order to [produce] holiness. we are delivered from the law, that we may be united to Christ; and we are united to Christ, that we may bring forth fruit unto God. As deliverance from the penalty of the law is in order to [produce] holiness, it is vain to expect that deliverance, except with a view to the end for which it is granted" (Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n. d.]. p. 220).

Now let's note that Godly fruit exists basically in two dimensions: attitude and action.

The fruit of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life is manifested internally in his attitudes of Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. (Gal 5:22-23)

As far as Godly actions are concerned, Jesus said;

John 15:1-2 (NASB)

¹ "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

² "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.

The writer of Hebrews writes about the fruit of our lips;

Hebrews 13:15 (NASB)

¹⁵ Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.

Paul then also writes to the Philippians about right living;

Philippians 1:11 (NASB)

¹¹ having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Now in verse 5 Paul reminds his readers of four things that characterized their old lives as unbelievers.

Romans 7:5 (NASB)

⁵ For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.

1. They were in the flesh
2. Their lives were characterized by sinful passions
3. These sinful passions were aroused by the Law
4. Their lives were also characterized by unceasing work bearing fruit unto death.

THEY WERE IN THE FLESH

The word flesh here is used in a moral and ethical sense, with an evil connotation. Paul uses it here and in chapter 8 in that way again and again.

Paul uses it in his letter to the Romans, to the Galatians, and the Ephesians and in every case, he uses it to speak of unredeemed humanness.

A person who lives in the flesh cannot belong to Christ.

Romans 8:9 (NASB)

⁹ However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

Now while a believer can never again be in the flesh, the flesh is still able to manifest itself in the believer, when he slips back into the ways of the flesh.

LIVES CHARACTERIZED BY SINFUL PASSIONS

The believer's old life was characterized by **sinful passions**, the impulses to think and to do evil that are generated in those who are in the flesh.

THOSE PASSIONS AROUSED BY THE LAW

Their passions aroused by the law, how is it that a good thing such as the holy **Law** of God, can arouse that which is sinful.

First of all, it does so because, apart from the knowledge of the Law, a person would not know good from evil, the Law, in declaring what is wrong also aroused evil in the unregenerate person because his naturally rebellious nature makes him want to do the very things he learns are forbidden.

LIVES CHARACTERIZED BY UNCEASING WORK

He works unceasingly in his sinful passions, **using the members of his body bearing fruit for death.**

The word work here comes from a Greek word meaning power. We get our word energy from the same Greek word.

So, the phrase **members of our body** sum up the whole person in all his components as being the victim of **sinful passions** energized to produce the **fruit** of ultimate and eternal divine judgment in **death**.

And so now we come to the Affirmation. Which we will take up next time.